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RUFQADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK PRIORITY

RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1302

RHFMIS/AFSOUTH NAPLES IT PRIORITY

RHMFISS/CDR TF FALCON PRIORITY

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RUEPGEA/CDR650THMIGP SHAPE BE PRIORITY

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC PRIORITY

RUFQANA/USNIC PRISTINA SR PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRISTINA 000723

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TAGS: PREL PGOV KDEM KV

SUBJECT: KOSOVO: ELECTIONS PLANNING GAINS TRACTION

REF: A. PRISTINA 687

B. PRISTINA 668

Classified By: COM Tina Kaidanow for reason 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: An approaching November 17 elections date and clear signals from UNMIK, OSCE and others to get to work have compelled Kosovar politicians and election officials to focus more energy on necessary organizational issues and less on public grandstanding about the alleged deficiencies of the process. A recent series of meetings of the Central Election Commission (CEC), chaired by OSCE Amb. Werner Wnendt, has forced decisions on technical issues and finally galvanized all actors (including internationals) into operationalizing their plans. An important catalyst in all of this has been the presence at the meetings of both PDSRSG Steven Schook and USOP. Continued strong leadership by the CEC over the next six weeks will be essential in keeping this process on track.

While some technical aspects to the elections, such as printing of ballots and verification of voter registration are challenges, voter education will be essential to a successful outcome. Through IFES, USAID is providing USD 400,000 to support a public information campaign, which kicked off the last week of September, and an additional USD 400,000 for civil society monitoring of elections activities and a parallel vote count. USOP also plans to field teams of monitors on election day, operating in close coordination but independently of the Council of Europe, which has overall responsibility for the monitoring effort. While good progress has been made to date, we will need to keep the pressure on both the internationals and Kosovars to keep to the tight elections timeline. END SUMMARY.

Technical Preparations on Track

¶2. (C) In recent CEC meetings, outgoing OSCE Mission Head Werner Wnendt was active in finalizing technical aspects of the election, in some cases without consensus. With a push from PDSRSG Schook and USOP, Wnendt approved the rule for establishing Polling Station Committees (PSC), got agreement from the CEC on the appointment of a senior procurement officer, finalized the appointments of the Municipal Election Commissions (MEC), and won support for the appointment of an

official CEC secretariat spokesperson. Significantly, he cut off lengthy discussion on the best way to manage out-of-Kosovo voting and determined it would be done through the mail using ballots downloaded from the CEC website.

(NOTE: Wnendt departed Kosovo September 27. He was replaced by Tim Guldmann, a Swiss diplomat and former OSCE head in Croatia. END NOTE.)

13. (SBU) With most rules, regulations and key hiring approved or accomplished, the process must now be operationalized. UNMIK's Office of the Legal Advisor (OLA) along with OSCE will ensure that the new senior procurement officer has streamlined authority for tendering and contracting for all necessary contracts. With the new CEC Secretariat spokesman on board, the public and the press will

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be able to direct all inquiries on process and technical aspects of the elections to one authoritative voice. The person identified for the job is a Kosovar national currently on the OSCE staff with experience and a good reputation.

14. (SBU) As of October 1, all political entities which had applied to participate in the November 17 elections had been certified by the CEC, one week ahead of schedule. The ballot lottery which will determine the order in which the political entities will be listed on the ballot took place October 4. (COMMENT: This gives OSCE important extra time for printing the ballots, the logistics of which has been the cause of considerable hand wringing at several private meetings with USOP. END COMMENT.)

USOP Focus on Voter Education, Monitoring Effort

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15. (SBU) While the CEC, OSCE, and UNMIK have focused on  
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standing up the elections (with USOP's strong support), USOP, through USAID and its partners, has taken the lead to support a public information campaign, using IFES as the primary implementer. The campaign will roll out television, radio and newspaper advertisements in three phases: a teaser phase telling Kosovars how and where to register and what the color-coded ballots will look like (September 24-30); an informational/motivational phase (October 1 - November 17); and a "respect the results" phase November 17 through any necessary second round voting. Two themes will be woven throughout the campaign: "Every Vote Counts" and "Your Vote is Secret." All communications will be done in Albanian, Serbian and to a lesser degree, in Turkish, Bosnian and the Roma language. Additionally, television ads will have sign language interpretation. The ballots used on November 17 will be color-coded: red border for Kosovo Assembly, blue border for municipal councils, and yellow border for direct election of mayors. These colors will also be used in the voter education campaigns so that information regarding the Assembly elections will make heavy use of red, etc.

16. (SBU) In addition to funding the public information campaign, we are providing funding for a domestic NGO coalition, including organizations from the Kosovo Serb community, which will undertake various activities including: voter awareness, Get Out The Vote (GOTV) events, media monitoring, election commission monitoring, a parallel vote count, and supporting an elections night media center. Also, a number of KFOR commands will assist in the production of voter information materials through design, production and distribution of materials on behalf of the NGO coalition.

17. (C) Plans are also underway for USOP to stand up election monitoring teams. We will closely cooperate with and seek credentials and training from the Council of Europe, responsible for the overall monitoring effort, but will field our own teams independently and maintain our own reporting channels.

¶8. (C) COMMENT: While good progress has been made to date on organizing these elections, we will need to keep the pressure on both the internationals and the Kosovars to follow through on the technical and political challenges that remain. New OSCE Head of Mission Guldmann appears ready to take on these challenges, telling COM in an October 3 courtesy call that he is confident that the elections will take place on time and that he has put the OSCE elections unit directly under his control. For his part, President Sejdiu has invited all main political parties to a dinner on October 5 to stress the need for a calm, mature elections campaign that does not use the final status process as a political football.

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